

**INNOVATIVE
APPROACHES**

**TO PREVENTING AND COUNTERING
VIOLENT EXTREMISM**

REPORT OF THE MEETING

BRUSSELS, 31 JANUARY 2019

INNOVATIVE APPROACHES

to Preventing and Countering
Violent Extremism



Hosted by the Member of the European
Parliament, Ms. Ana Gomes

Co-organized by the United Nations
Interregional Crime and Justice Research
Institute (UNICRI)



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*United Nations Interregional Crime and Justice Research Institute (UNICRI)
Viale Maestri del Lavoro, 10, 10127 Torino – Italy
Tel: +39 011-6537 111 / Fax: +39 011-6313 368
Website: www.unicri.it
E-mail: unicri.publicinfo@un.org*

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A. INTRODUCTION

Political violence and societal extremism continue to represent a global threat, compromising the security, social cohesion, values and culture of inclusiveness of several regions. Since 2005, the European Union (EU) has, with an increasing degree of political, technical and financial attention, been addressing violent extremism, radicalisation and recruitment of persons to violent extremism.

It is within this context that the European Commission, through its Directorate-General for Neighbourhood and Enlargement Negotiations (DG NEAR), has funded a programme on countering radicalisation and violent extremism in the regions of Sahel and Maghreb, implemented by the United Nations Interregional Crime and Justice Research Institute (UNICRI). In implementing the programme, UNICRI works with over 70 civil society organizations in Algeria, Burkina Faso, Chad, Libya, Mali, Mauritania, Morocco, Niger and Tunisia.

On 31 January 2019, a Member of the European Parliament (MEP), Ms. Ana Gomes, and UNICRI organised a meeting on *Innovative Approaches to Preventing and Countering Violent Extremism*. The meeting, held at the European Parliament (EP), brought forward practical discussion on how to better understand, prevent and counter the phenomenon of violent extremism.

B. OPENING REMARKS

The meeting was opened by MEP Ms. Ana Gomes, followed by introductory remarks delivered by the UNICRI Director *a.i.*, Ms. Bettina Tucci-Bartsiotas, and the EU Special Representative for Sahel, Mr. Angel Losada.



In her role as coordinator for the European Parliament's Special Committee on Terrorism, MEP Ms. Ana Gomes has overseen the drafting of the report on Findings and Recommendations of the Committee. The report, adopted by the European Parliament in a plenary session in December 2018, has gone through over 1,500 amendments, a clear indicator of its importance. In drafting the report, the Committee has investigated the financing not only of acts of terrorism but also of the entire networks relied upon for disseminating radical messages. The latter has particular relevance in fuelling marginalisation. MEP Gomes further highlighted the importance of social groups and networks in the process of radicalisation. She recalled the 2002 terrorist bombing in Indonesia, and the positive role played by imams. MEP Gomes drew attention to the training of religious leaders in shaping European Islam. She concluded by indicating that the report gives due consideration to the victims of terrorist acts, who are all too frequently neglected.

Director *a.i.* of UNICRI Ms. Bettina Tucci Bartsiotas thanked MEP Ana Gomes for hosting such an important event. In her address, she gave a brief introduction on UNICRI's mission and strategy. Created in 1968, the Institute serves the international community in formulating and implementing improved policies in the field of crime prevention and justice. In its 50-year history, UNICRI has addressed threats and vulnerabilities impacting good governance, sustainable development, human rights and security. UNICRI implements holistic and innovative programmes to confront traditional and emerging threats. The services it offers include assessing countries' risks and needs; serving as a training and capacity-building hub; and acting as a worldwide forum to identify, tailor and test strategies and actions. Its overarching objective is to achieve the goals of the United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and in particular Goal 16: promoting peaceful, just and inclusive societies, free from crime and violence.

For fifteen years, UNICRI has worked on preventing and countering violent extremism. As a member of the United Nations (UN) Global Counter-Terrorism Coordination Compact, it supports the UN's Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy. UNICRI has assisted Member States in developing rehabilitation and reintegration strategies for violent extremist offenders and returning foreign terrorist fighters, identifying alternatives to incarceration for juveniles and counter-measures to address the nexus between transnational organized crime and terrorism.

The programme implemented with the support of the DG NEAR is particularly innovative, as it is testing, through a large number of micro-grants, actions that make communities more resilient to radicalisation. This will allow UNICRI to document and analyse both successes and apparent failures, and, in doing so, to contribute to the EU's and the UN Member States' rationalization of investing in similar initiatives in the future.

EU Special Representative for the Sahel Mr. Angel Losada highlighted that the security of Europe depends upon the security in the Sahel. He had just returned from a visit to four Sahel countries, namely Burkina Faso, Chad, Mali and Niger, and could see the many ways in which the security situation in these countries was related to that of Europe. The cornerstone for peace in the Sahel was Mali, which is currently engaged in a peace process. Should it not be possible to establish peace in Mali, there will be no peace in the Sahel. The region is suffering from the absence of governance and services, with violent extremist groups quickly filling the gap. The region has long been marked by intercommunity conflicts, but these have now become more prominent due to a demographic explosion and the negative impact of climate change. Thus, the combination of all these problems have prepared the ground for violent extremist groups to step in and offer services. The groups collect taxes on those services combined with revenues from trafficking in goods, drugs and people. The situation has been further complicated by the Tuareg revolution that erupted in the north of Mali and has slowly been moving south, also engulfing Burkina Faso.

The European Union is taking action to try to remedy this situation. It has developed a strategy on security and development, along with a regional action plan. The approach foresees engagement with youth in fighting radicalisation and addresses the situation of migrants along with the more traditional security aspect of combating terrorism. With regard to the latter, the European Union is supporting the G5 Sahel force. Most recently, it has held a conference in December 2018 in Nouakchott to approve the next batch of projects.

The challenges remain and include coordination on the ground. There are presently 17 strategies for the Sahel, which serves as a positive indicator of the amount of attention given to the region and underlines the need for establishing strategic partnerships in order to implement them. In this context, Special Representative Losada expressed appreciation at seeing UNICRI and the European Commission's DG NEAR collaborating.

C. SESSION I: THE NATURE OF THREAT

The first session of the meeting analysed the nature of threat from violent and non-violent extremist movements. The session's first speaker, Kyai Haji Yahya Cholil Staquf, is General Secretary of Nahdlatul Ulama (NU), the world's largest Muslim organization, and Emissary of Indonesia's largest Islamic political party, PKB. As General Secretary of the NU, Mr. Staquf represents over 50 million Muslim followers from Indonesia, a country with 40,000 religious schools (madrasas) and tens of thousands Muslim scholars (ulemas). Mr. Staquf is also a member of Indonesia's Presidential Advisory Council, with a protocol rank equivalent to Minister of State, and in this capacity, he headed an official Indonesian Government delegation to the joint meeting.

Mr. Staquf stressed that the primary drivers of religious extremism and violence amongst Muslim communities worldwide are certain obsolete and problematic tenets of orthodox Islam that enjoin religious enmity, supremacy and violence. A mental framework built upon these problematic tenets informs the actions of Islamist radicals, and provides an authoritative doctrinal basis for extremism. Mr. Staquf stressed the need for everyone, both Muslims and non-Muslims, to acknowledge and address this reality.

Mr. Staquf identified four areas of particular concern, namely:

- The view that enmity and segregation between Muslims and non-Muslims is normative.
- The view that a universal Caliphate with one Muslim ruler controlling Muslims universally is an ultimate political aspiration of Islam.
- The view that urges Muslims to defy any man-made laws in the name of Sharia.
- The view that urges Muslims to engage in any conflict involving Muslims anywhere in the name of helping fellow Muslim brothers.

Mr. Staquf's organisation is raising awareness of these obsolete yet authoritative tenets of Islamic orthodoxy, emphasising their relation to the historical context in which they emerged, which is no longer valid. Mr. Staquf believes in the need to encourage Muslim religious leaders to re-contextualize (i.e. reform) these basic tenets. Should this happen, provocation from extremists would be far less effective.

The next speaker, Mr. Tijani Mohamed El Kerim, founder and director of the Mauritanian Institute for Access to Modernity, drew attention to the regions of the Maghreb and the Sahel being strategically marked by the vast expanse of the Sahara, which

stretches over eight million square kilometres. Terrorist groups have been present in the desert of the two regions for over 20 years. Islamic Maghreb was the first, with over ten organisations now operating in the region. Their main distinction is the link they have with either Al Qaeda or Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL). However, this distinction notwithstanding, a spirit of cooperation among these organisations can be perceived. There have been no recorded cases of disputes between them.



Mr. Tijani Mohamed El Kerim highlighted the negative influence of radical movements and advocated for a middle way to be followed – one of moderation, avoiding exaggeration. Moreover, Mr. Tijani Mohamed El Kerim suggested that if that is the case, questions must be asked as to where these radical ideas are coming from and who is financially supporting their dissemination. In his view, these issues need to be discussed openly and facts recognised.

Mr. Tijani Mohamed El Kerim was of the opinion that the porous borders and poor governance in Maghreb and Sahel are facilitating the propagation of extremist groups. In particular, he underlined the following enabling factors:

- Absence of inclusive policies.
- The ease of trafficking in illicit goods, such as drugs, enabling the groups' enrichment.
- Overall poor governance in the regions, including over the matters of education and civil society.

Mr. Tijani Mohamed El Kerim suggested that states marked by good governance, inclusive social and economic policies and a functioning justice system are more resilient to radicalisation and the appeal of violent extremist groups. Therefore, the solution to radicalisation in Maghreb and Sahel cannot be solely militarily, but rather needs to encompass the issues of development and good governance.

D. SESSION II: THE ROOT CAUSES OF RADICALISATION AND EXTREMISM

Summarising the views of Mr. Staquf and Mr. Tijani Mohamed El Kerim, the moderator underlined the different perspectives in their approaches. Mr. Staquf saw violent extremism as being nurtured by certain Islamist precepts, whereas Mr. Tijani Mohamed El Kerim focused on the root causes of radicalisation. The next speaker was Ms. Edit Schlaffer, founder and Executive Director of *Women without Borders*, an organisation which is advocating for greater involvement of women in actions preventing violent extremism.

Ms. Schlaffer introduced her organisation, *Women without Borders*, which was founded in 2001 with headquarters in Vienna, Austria. Ms. Schlaffer drew attention to the international community's strong focus on hard security since the terrorist attacks in New York on 11 September 2001, coupled with substantial investment of resources. The outcome, however, shows a mixed picture. According to Ms. Schlaffer, approaches involving only security measures without safeguarding mechanisms do not work. She indicated that the key stakeholders on the ground are not being reached without the involvement of civil society in preventing extremism and promoting de-radicalization.

Ms. Schlaffer proceeded to note that security is a human right which requires the cooperation of governmental and non-governmental actors. The global investment must focus on integrated security architecture. While freedom and democracy are the cornerstones of an open society, freedom can engender fear and resistance. There is a need to continue to fight for and defend it with the tools of critical thinking, targeted education and continuous encouragement.

The sensitivity of the youth to exclusion first becomes apparent within a family and the educational system. As the goal of violent extremist groups is to undermine democracy and its inclusive policies, action is needed to counterbalance this effort and build protective layers at different levels, including:

- The family and schools;
- The local and municipal level;
- The national level.

At each of these levels, one needs to strengthen an individual's identity and sense of belonging and promote empathy. Starting from the first protective layer, it is necessary

to construct an informal security structure. In order to construct such “private” security architecture, Ms. Schlaffer proposed to focus on educators. In her view, mothers are the first educators in the lives of their children, and, as such, potentially their first line of defence. Thanks to their emotional connection with the children and their readiness to act, mothers are well positioned to be key allies. They need the confidence and the competence to recognise warning signs such as anger, restlessness and isolation, and to address them in due time. Ms. Schlaffer urged empowering, educating and encouraging mothers to create a barrier between radical influences and the young who are targeted by the toxic and polarizing ideologies of religious and right-wing extremism. She noted, however, that these topics are frequently considered taboo within a family. Nonetheless, the very tools used for online and offline recruitment, those of listening and empathising, need to be claimed by the mothers as well.

The next speaker was the Chairman of the *Ahmed Tlili Foundation* from Tunisia and beneficiary of the EU-UNICRI programme, Mr. Ridha Tlili. Mr. Tlili observed that, in certain states, religion and society are intrinsically linked. Similarly, liberty and society cannot be separated. Taking these observations as its starting points, the Foundation is working with UNICRI on improving the respect for the dignity of women. Their main interest is the messages transmitted by imams to people during sermons delivered in mosques. The objective is for the dignity of women to be recognised.

Essentially, the Foundation promotes the equality of men and women in line with the 2014 Constitution of Tunisia. Working solely with imams, however, is not enough, Mr. Tlili added. There is a need to sensitise women preachers who are in touch with families and with mothers in particular. The Foundation is educating female preachers and has reached out to the government to establish a sustainable programme of education.



E. SESSION III: IMPROVING COHERENCE, COORDINATION AND EVALUATION

Before opening the floor to the speakers of the final, third session, the moderator summarised the points advanced by the previous speakers. The moderator observed that mothers need safe space to talk about what is happening with their children. Their link with the community needs to be strong. Their responsibility is indeed great as they may be expected to denounce their child or a relative. In Tunisia, women play a great role in religious instruction. Female preachers have access to households that imams do not, and can be vehicles for both radicalisation and prevention.

Mr. Stephen Ulph, a counter-terrorism expert from United Kingdom and analyst of Islamist ideology and radical movements, was the next speaker. In introducing him, the moderator urged taking seriously the messages of radical movements as they are frequently acting upon them. The moderator referred to the United Nations and the European Union documents calling for improved risk assessment of hate speech and content in people, places and projects.

Mr. Stephen Ulph returned to the points made by the previous speakers. The Islamic ideology contains within itself certain problematic doctrinal tenets. Enmity towards non-Muslims is formative and he noted that Mr. Staquf demonstrates great courage in bringing it forward. Mr. Tijani Mohamed El Kerim analysed the push factors, which are important and tend to inform most of analysts' work. However, these factors are unable to explain the fact that Salafists are more orthodox than orthodoxy. Ms. Schlaffer referred to the huge expenditure incurred in relying on security-based solutions only, which has given us mixed results. She has suggested that new approaches are needed for strengthening common identity. The only problem in Mr. Ulph's view was that the Islamic doctrinal tenets are designed to break down the common identity. Finally, Mr. Tlili presented the pull factors embedded in the religious discourse and the need to build mutual respect.

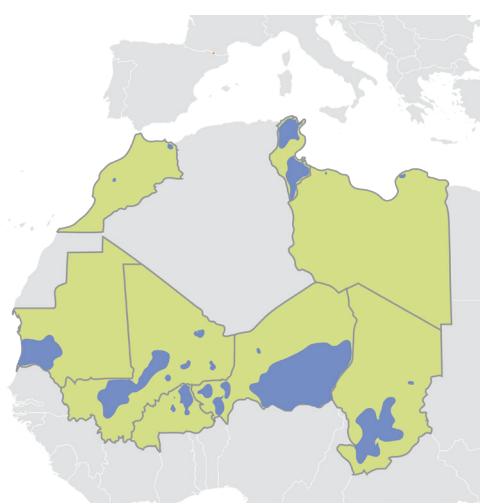
Mr. Ulph proceeded to draw attention to the key strategic documents, such as the United Nations Security Council Resolutions on risk assessment tools and effective counter-narratives.¹ The previously mentioned European Parliament's report contains numerous reflections on the seriousness of the problem. The European Union Agency for Law Enforcement Cooperation (EUROPOL) estimates that some 30,000 Jihadists are

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¹ United Nations Security Council Resolution 2396 (2017) on threat to international peace and security caused by terrorist acts (Para 34 and 38) and Resolution 2354 (2017).

active in the European Union, aided by uncontrolled religious institutions. The report further acknowledges that there is no clear methodology for ensuring effectiveness of programmes. It recommends tools and methods to be designed to identify the problem and best practices, but does not suggest how this is to be done. There are no recommended risk assessment tools, such as the checks of religious education curricula.

This being the case, Mr. Ulph questioned what one should look for as indicators of risky behaviour. His recommendation would be to look into the core doctrine and understand the sources of the hate speech, such as the one contained in *Al-walā' wal-barā'*, which demands an active promotion of separation, disdain and enmity. An effort is required to understand the mindset from within and construct risk assessment tools on this basis.

The next speakers were Ms. Manuela Brunero and Ms. Itziar Arispe of UNICRI. Their work has focused on understanding how to rationalise the financing of efforts to prevent and counter violent extremism. In so doing, they have come across evaluation challenges, but have, most importantly, been able to identify innovative approaches to addressing the problem.



Ms. Manuela Brunero presented the UNICRI programme on countering radicalisation and violent extremism in the regions of Sahel and Maghreb.² As mentioned earlier, the programme is funded by DG NEAR and involves over 70 actions implemented by civil society organizations in Algeria, Burkina Faso, Chad, Libya, Mali, Mauritania, Morocco, Niger and Tunisia. In implementing them, UNICRI adopted a neutral approach, which implied that selected projects were not *a priori* required to have specific focus on preventing or countering violent extremism.

There were no preconceived ideas as to the topics the projects had to address or the manner in which they would be carried out. The possibility of some of the projects failing to deliver set results was embraced as an opportunity to learn what works as opposed to what does not, and to understand the reasons. The civil society partners of UNICRI have identified 22 grievances potentially leading to violent radicalisation. At the same time, a limited number of them have actually been addressed. The projects focused in particular on active citizenship, social inclusion, equal access to

2 http://www.unicri.it/topics/counter_terrorism/countering_violent_extremism_Sahel_Maghreb/

education, and religious education. In line with the pilot nature of the programme, projects' themes and approaches were diverse and included environmental issues, the promotion of art and culture, the use of radio as a communicative tool for security-related issues, and the organisation of sport events.

The projects also had varied target groups, including civil society activists, teachers in Koranic schools, imams and religious leaders, journalists, local administration officials, minority groups, tribal leaders, refugees and returnees, and former slaves. This variety can be seen as indicative of the complexity of the problem. Most importantly, nearly all projects targeted, either directly or indirectly, youth and women. Practically all have defined targets for ensuring female participation.

In evaluating these projects, UNICRI faced a number of challenges. Ms. Itziar Arispe, Monitoring and Evaluation Officer at UNICRI, proceeded to address some of the key analytical challenges, which included:

- Causality – the difficulty of attributing any kind of change to the projects.
- Negative outcome – the difficulty in proving the negative trend of radicalisation.
- The definition of the expected change – which is practically non-existent.

Furthermore, there have been practical challenges in data availability and its reliability, as well as in the lack of capacities, resources and time for partner organisations to furnish the data. The evaluation approach has been formative, being conducted in parallel with project implementation. In selecting its units of analysis, UNICRI has gone one step further and evaluated grantees as well. Finally, qualitative methods have been used, whereby perceptions and attitudes have been taken into consideration.

In the course of this evaluation, UNICRI has learned many lessons. For instance:

- It is important to capture the minds of those potentially at risk of radicalisation while promoting values that are universal and relevant to all. In the process, one has to be well versed in the intricacies of the context and adjust the intervention accordingly, using contextualised communication codes that resonates with the community members.
- Interventions that are more focused on particular groups of at-risk community members and engage with them over a longer period of time have a greater probability of success, defined in this case as success in shifting perceptions and creating lasting patterns of behaviour.
- It is of critical importance to work with and through trusted community actors. Actors that put their reputation at stake for the sake of their mission have everything to lose, but are also more trustworthy and better positioned to effect change, leading by example.

LESSONS LEARNED

TAILORED TO
CULTURAL
CONTEXT



FOCUSED
INTERVENTION



LONGER
INVOLVEMENT



LOCALLY
APPLIED



TRUSTED
COMMUNITY
ACTORS

The final speaker of the session was Mr. Franck Peinaud, counter-terrorism and security expert seconded to the EU Delegation in Tunisia. Mr. Peinaud considered that the ultimate goal of combating violent extremism is to avoid civil war within a society by preventing the intrusion of violence into the political sphere. When he arrived in Tunisia, counter-terrorism was his main focus. Over time, it has also come to include preventing and countering violent extremism, which is much more difficult. In his view, it is important to act and in so doing, rely on the states concerned. The states have to impose a red line through their counter-terrorism legislation. In the case of Tunisia, such a law has enabled for a new body to be created at the level of Prime Minister's Office, which helps to facilitate their work.

On the other side, the European Union Agency for Law Enforcement Cooperation (Europol), through the European Union's Internet Referral Unit (EU IRU), combats terrorist on the Internet. This consists of directly negotiating the deletion of illegal content with private web platforms. Mr. Peinaud suggested that it would be useful to eventually establish a link with the Tunisian authorities and work together on removing illegal content in Arabic.

Finally, Mr. Peinaud agreed that it is important to keep evaluating interventions in the field as they are being implemented in order to discern those that are relevant from those that are less so. This is highly time-consuming and challenging, in particular in the case of interventions which seek to prevent violent extremism, and which are working predominantly with civil society in detecting elements of radicalisation in people before their actual manifestation. This calls for innovative approaches and the use of every possible instrument.

The moderator concluded the session by recalling the importance of risk assessment when deciding upon partners to fund. UNICRI is making a contribution by testing various approaches through over 70 grassroots interventions and documenting both success and failure. The vetting of partners, and collaboration with trusted community actors whose discourse is coherent with their actions, is of great importance. The UN and EU documents favour reintegration of families and migration. At the same time, the European Union Court of Auditors report from 2009 called for indicators of radicalisation to be defined.



F. SPEAKER BIOGRAPHIES



Ana Gomes has been a Member of the European Parliament since 2004. She is the Vice-Chair of the Special Committee on Financial Crimes, Tax Evasion and Tax Avoidance (TAX3) and she was the S&D Coordinator for the Special Committee on Terrorism (TERR). She is a member of the Committee on Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs (LIBE), of the Subcommittee for Security and Defence (SEDE), and of the Delegation for relations with the United States and the Delegation to the Parliamentary Assembly of the Union for the Mediterranean. She is substitute member on the Foreign Affairs Committee (AFET) and on the Subcommittee on Human Rights (DROI). Ms. Gomes has been Rapporteur for Libya, Iraq, Saudi Arabia and the PCA with Indonesia. She is also the Chair of the European Parliament Friendship Group with Indonesia and member of the Intergroup on LGBTI Rights and on Western Sahara.

Her main work focuses on foreign affairs, namely security and defence, human rights, justice and home affairs, the fight against tax havens and corruption, and the rule of law. With an academic background in law, Ms. Gomes was a career diplomat from 1980 until 2003, when she entered party politics. She had served in the Portuguese Missions at the UN in New York and Geneva and in the Embassies in Tokyo and London. Between 1999 and 2003 she was the Portuguese Ambassador in Jakarta, where she played a role in the process leading up to the independence of East Timor and in the reestablishment of diplomatic relations between Portugal and Indonesia.



Bettina Tucci-Bartsiotas was appointed the Director of UNICRI *a.i.* in September 2018. Ms. Bartsiotas was Assistant Secretary-General, Controller of the United Nations Secretariat. In that role, she provided guidance on budgetary and financial issues, overseeing the development and implementation of the UN regular and peacekeeping budgets. She was responsible for presenting to and deliberating with Members States on UN matters with programmatic, budgetary and financial implications.

From 1994 to 2014, Ms. Bartsiotas held senior management positions at the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), Vienna (Austria), and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), New York. Previously she had held positions with the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the Inter-American Development Bank (IADB), Washington, D.C. Ms. Bartsiotas has helped define the strategy of the International Public-Sector Accounting Standards (IPSAS) and was involved in the planning and implementation of Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) systems.



Angel Losada was appointed the EU Special Representative for the Sahel on 1 November 2015. He leads the EU's contribution to regional and international efforts for lasting peace, security and development in the Sahel. He also coordinates the EU's comprehensive approach to the regional crisis, on the basis of the EU Strategy for Security and Development in the Sahel.

Mr. Losada is a senior Spanish diplomat with more than 30 years of experience. He previously served as Ambassador of Spain to Nigeria and Kuwait.



Kyai Haji Yahya Cholil Staquf serves as General Secretary of the Nahdlatul Ulama Supreme Council - the world's largest Muslim organization, with over 50 million members and 14,000 madrasahs - which was established in 1926 and adheres to the traditions of Sunni Islam. Yahya Cholil Staquf serves on the executive board of the U.S.-Indonesia Council on Religion and Pluralism. He has co-founded the U.S.-based organization *Bayt ar-Rahmah li ad-Da'wa al-Islamiyah Rahmatan li al-'Alamin* (The Home of Divine Grace for Revealing and Nurturing Islam as a Blessing for All Creation) in 2014, to serve as a hub for the expansion of

Nahdlatul Ulama operations in North America, Europe and the Middle East, and to consolidate the global Sunni Muslim community. He is a member of its board of directors and Director of Religious Affairs.

Descended from a long line of prominent Javanese religious scholars, KH. Yahya Cholil Staquf was educated from earliest childhood in the formal and esoteric (spiritual) sciences of Islam. He was a member of Indonesia's National Electoral Commission during the nation's transition from authoritarian rule to democracy, and served as spokesman to Indonesia's first democratically-elected head of state, Kyai Haji Abdurrahman Wahid. Yahya played a key role in the establishment of the Vienna Observatory for Applied Research on Terrorism and Extremism (VORTEX), which combines academic rigor with theological expertise and generations of experience on countering radical ideology and movements. He has authored the *International Summit of Moderate Islamic Leaders Nahdlatul Ulama Declaration* (2016); the historic *Gerakan Pemuda Ansor Declaration on Humanitarian Islam* (2017); and the *Nusantara Manifesto* (2018), which seek to reinterpret Islamic law dating from the Middle Ages in ways that conform to 21st century norms.



Tijani Mohamed El Kerim has over 40 years of experience in governmental and non-governmental organisations. In 1978, Mr. El Kerim served as a Junior Minister in charge of youth and sports, and then as Educational Counselor at the National Educational Institute (IPN). From 1992 to 1996, he was elected as a Member of Parliament representing Tevragh Zeina (Nouakchott) constituency. In his diplomatic career, Mr. El Kerim has been Mauritanian representative in the Gambia (1996-1999), Mauritanian Ambassador to Cote d'Ivoire, Ghana and Liberia (1999-2002), to Canada (2002-2004), to the United States and to Australia (2004-2008).

In 2009, Mr. El Kerim founded the Mauritanian Institute for Access to Modernity and is still serving as its Director. As an expert on radicalization and countering violent extremism, Mr. El Kerim has worked with the European Union Delegation in Nouakchott, with the Civipol Council–EUTANS Project, in particular in Nigeria and in Nouakchott, Mauritania, and most recently with UNICRI.



Edit Schlaffer is a social scientist, author and activist working on gender, counter-terrorism strategies, peace-building through dialogue, and the role of civil society in improving the security architecture. Ms. Schlaffer is the founder of *Women without Borders*, an international research and lobbying organisation focusing on female diplomacy. She serves as Civil Society Board Member for the Global Community Engagement and Resilience Fund (GCERF), was the Director of the Ludwig Boltzmann Institute for Politics and Interpersonal Relations (1980–2001), and Chairperson of the Austrian Foundation for World Population and International Cooperation (2004–11).

Her numerous publications have earned critical acclaim. She is a regular contributor to various news outlets, including Huffington Post and Reuters Trust Law blogs. Ms. Schlaffer has received international recognition and numerous awards, including the Soroptimist International Europe Peace Prize in 2015 and the Kaethe Leichter Austrian State Prize for Gender Equality and Research in 2005.

Women without Borders work with families across the world. They have carried out sociological research on the role of mothers, which has concluded that mothers need a trusting environment to counterbalance the gaps of trust that often appear within a family. In translating these conclusions into an operational policy, *Women without Borders* have created *MotherSchools: Parenting for Peace!*, a model which allows mothers to deconstruct individual and social barriers in order to address the taboo issue of extremism and improve their knowledge of early warning signs. *MotherSchools* facilitates collective strategizing to counter radical influences in adolescent children, families and communities at large.

Women without Borders trains individuals drawn from professional pools including teachers, psychologists and community leaders to become *MotherSchools* teachers. The model has been implemented in 15 countries and has reached out to around 3,000 concerned mothers. *Women without Borders* are currently carrying out a study to inform their next action, which will include fathers, and to establish a similar kind of schools for them.



Ridha Tlili is a professor of history, son of the famous Ahmed Tlili and current president of his father’s eponymous foundation. He has worked on the history of the social movement in Tunisia and the Maghreb, and published, among other works, the *Carthage of the World* (UNESCO), *The Challenges of Interculturality in the Mediterranean* (Catalan Institute of the Mediterranean) and a book on intercultural relations between the Mediterranean and the Latin-American world.

Stephen Ulph is a Senior Fellow with the Jamestown Foundation and regularly researches and lectures on aspects of Islamist ideologization. He is engaged in projects focusing on the challenges of understanding Islamist radicalism and constructing credible de-radicalisation, in both cases prioritising starting-points within the mindset of the violent extremists and thus more penetrative in their application.



Manuela Brunero is a Programme Officer in the Counter-Terrorism Unit at the United Nations Interregional Crime and Justice Research Institute (UNICRI). She is responsible for developing and managing projects and capacity-building activities related to the rehabilitation and reintegration of violent extremist offenders and returning foreign terrorist fighters, countering violent extremism, and rule of law-based approaches to counter-terrorism. Before joining UNICRI in 2010, Ms. Brunero worked in the field of social and economic inclusion in the Balkans at the office of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in Albania and at the International Labour Organization (ILO).



Itziar Arispe has substantial experience in the monitoring and evaluation of socioeconomic development and strategic management at international development organizations (in UN-related bodies, NGOs, the private sector and academia). Her fields of expertise include evaluation capacity building, trends and approaches on evaluation, international standards for evaluation, qualitative comparative analysis, and impact evaluations. Since August 2012, Ms. Arispe has been responsible for the

Monitoring and Evaluation function at the United Nations Interregional Crime and Justice Research Institute (UNICRI). Ms. Arispe holds a PhD in Applied Economics and a Master of Science in Peace and Development from the University of the Basque Country.



Franck Peinaud is a senior officer of the National Gendarmerie. Graduate of the French Saint-Cyr Military Academy, he has commanded various operational units and participated in several foreign operations and missions abroad, including in Kosovo, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Lebanon. He is a graduate of the *École de Guerre* and holds a master's degree in History of International Relations. He is currently Security and Counter Terrorism Adviser to the EU Ambassador in Tunisia, where he serves as a seconded national expert. Together with Grégoire Demezson, he co-authored *Europe Against Terrorism* (Nuvis Editions - Strategic Thought Collection, 7 March 2017).



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